

about the breadth of methods, theoretical outlooks and intentionalities present within the field of Chinese politics around the world.

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Playing by the Informal Rules: Why the Chinese Regime Remains Stable despite Rising Protests

YAO LI

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Playing by the Informal Rules is a study of protests in contemporary China. The author answers an interesting question that baffles the Western world, namely, why protests and regime stability coexist in China? Using a dataset of 1,418 protests from 2001 to 2012 and ten protest case studies, the author shows that the key to understanding this seeming contradiction is rooted in the way the Chinese authorities handle the protests, by using informal rules outside of formal institutions and regulations that can be accommodating or antagonistic.

The author describes three such informal rules: unauthorized protests can be informally acceptable, they can be treated with initial official compromise but backed by force, and they can be channelled into institutional solutions such as petition and mediation. These informal rules can be bent either way, depending on whether the protests are regime-engaging or regime-threatening. Most of the protests in the author's dataset are regime-engaging that allow the government to use accommodating rather than antagonistic informal norms. Such practice of accommodating informal rules contributes to regime legitimacy, although the author repeatedly cautions the reader that this does not mean democracy.

The strengths of this book are in the author's ten case studies; seven are regime-engaging and three are regime-threatening. The author was present at some of the protest scenes and interviewed both the protesters and police officers. These case studies based on careful field work, give the reader vivid examples of how the informal rules are applied in concrete circumstances.

By focusing on informal rules, Yao Li makes an important contribution to studying contentious politics, but also to understanding Chinese politics in general. It is too often that China is judged through the Western eyes of formal institutions and rules. For example, Chinese leaders are not elected through a well-defined set of formal rules, so they do not enjoy legitimacy, Chinese legal process does not provide justice because it does not follow the formal procedure, and Chinese government represses its citizens' religious practice because there are not many church goers.

Yet these matters are handled informally in China. Chinese leaders are carefully selected through multiple layers of bureaucratic review and those who reach the top have extensive governing experiences at lower levels. China's legal system may not be based on procedural justice, but as happened frequently in recent years, legal decisions have been overturned to accommodate public opinion in many cases. Measured by institutionalized religious behaviour, one may not see many church goers in China. When measured by informal religious practices such as ancestor worship and praying to supernatural forces, the Chinese are just as religious as

people in the West, where religion is highly formalized. Informal rules also extend to diplomacy. One example is illegal foreign workers. The Chinese government is well aware of these people and more or less tolerates them. When the relationship between China and a country goes wrong, the illegal workers from that country can become the targets of a diplomatic tug of war.

The Examples of informal rules can be found throughout various aspects of Chinese social, economic and political life. One cannot truly understand how the country functions without grasping these informal rules. This book will serve as an excellent introduction.

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Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in China: Domestic and Foreign Policy Dimensions

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Michael Clarke's edited volume on terrorism and counter-terrorism in China provides a well-researched, careful and multi-faceted look at terrorism and counter-terrorism issues facing the People's Republic of China (PRC) today. The book is a valuable resource for scholars interested in Xinjiang, in Chinese security and foreign policy behaviour, and in terrorism and counter-terrorism globally; it should be read widely, and not just by those who study Xinjiang or China.

The volume begins with a chapter by Clarke that provides the historical context for the book's later chapters, and that frames their contributions in terms of the "internal-external security nexus" that has long characterized CCP thinking about security threats. The next section unpacks domestic developments, examining the PRC's changing legal framework for counterterrorism (Zunyou Zhou), the application of domestic counter-terrorism policy in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR, Julia Famularo), and the unintended, often negative effects of China's narratives about and policies toward the XUAR since 2009 (Sean Roberts). The second half of the volume turns outward, looking at developments in the various regional environments wherein terrorism and counterterrorism have become increasingly salient to Beijing: Central Asia (Andrew Small), the Middle East (two chapters, by Mordechai Chaziza and Raffaello Pantucci) and South-East Asia (Stefanie Kam Li Yee).

The descriptive contribution that this volume makes simply by placing issues that are often treated in disaggregated fashion into a single framework is significant. As is highlighted in the Introduction, the tendency to dismiss terrorist threats to China as either insignificant or a mere excuse for repressiveness has limited the accumulation of knowledge about both the threat and Chinese policy responses. Taken together, however, these chapters make a compelling case that "China is now facing a terrorist threat at home that has links abroad" (p. 18), and has experienced a "major shift in the nature of [that] threat" (p. 26). Several of the chapters point out, with varying degrees of emphasis, that Beijing's own policies vis-à-vis its Uyghur population have worsened rather than mitigated this threat, rendering fears about Uyghur terrorism a